

**Testimony for the Appropriations Committee
February 24, 2022**

My name is Norma J. LoMonaco and I am from Mansfield, CT. I am testifying on the Governor's proposed budget H.B. No. 5037 (COMM) AN ACT ADJUSTING THE STATE BUDGET FOR THE BIENNIUM ENDING JUNE 30, 2023 that unfortunately does not include critical funding for our safety net providers and their employees.

After decades of underfunding, Connecticut's direct support providers are in crisis mode because the effects of the pandemic have impacted their ability to attract and retain direct care workers and other employees. This staff is critically important to the safety and well-being of many of Connecticut's residents with Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities (IDD), including my own family.

My name is Norma LoMonaco, My son is 40 years old with IDD and wants to be living in his own place as he did Pre Covid. My son had to come live with me during Covid, and has been with me ever since. My son has had 2 Agencies and the Agency can not find, attract and retain direct care workers. I believe problem is that Private Agencies can't adequately compensate their employees (Direct Hire Workers),so recruitment is very, very difficult. More financial resources have to be dedicated to Private Providers to improve salaries for employees. The lack of paid DirectCareWorkers has made it impossible for me to return to my position in a school system.

Without Paid Direct Workers my son is unable to access living in his own home, work in his community and enjoy events and activities in his community.

My son's programming has been so sporadic that his behavior has become challenging for his family and himself. He loved to be around people and friends and when told " you can not go work today" or "you don't have any staff to take you out", he is not one to stay at home and do nothing for his day. This is troubling for him to understand all that is happening to him to stay home with aging parents.

Without your help, our state's community service delivery system will continue to shrink and our loved ones will bear the brunt of this loss. We are already experiencing the worst staffing crisis that service providers have ever seen, which has resulted in an inability to resume programs paused during COVID and caused a rebound effect for family caregivers who are unable to return to work and contribute to Connecticut's economy.

Now more than ever, we need to ensure that critically necessary funding of \$150 million is included in this year's budget for the state's non-profit providers who care for our loved ones on a daily basis. We urge your support and ask that you add this funding to the budget before this committee. My Child Matters, my son is my loved one. I can not find direct care workers and retain them for my son.